

E L D R E D;

OR THE

BRITISH FREEHOLDER.

T R A G E D Y.

AS IT HAS BEEN PERFORMED

By His Majesty's Servants in LONDON.

**PERSUASUS HOC TIBI VERE,
MULTOS SAPE VIROS NULLIS MAJORIBUS ORTOS,
ET VIXISSE PROPOS, AMPLIS ET HONORIBUS AUCTOS.**

HOR. SAT. VI. LIB. I.

P R I N T E D

IN THE YEAR, M, DCC, LXXXII.

P R O L O G U E.

TH E feather'd eaglet flutt'ring on its nest,
Throbbing with terrors and with doubts oppress,
To the first bough his new-sledg'd pinion tries,
Ere he commits him to the vaulted skies;
Then through the wide expanse he wings his flight,
Cleaves the blue ether, and attempts the height.

Thus I, to prove the temper of my quill,
In petit Prologues first essay'd my skill.
The Public breath produc'd the latent vein,
And approbation cheer'd the infant-strain;
Till, bolder grown by the inspiring gale,
My bark, now larger, spreads a wider sail,
With sides more ponderous presumes to brave
The force of criticism's bursting wave.

But, metaphor apart:—Behold before ye,
The vent'rous Author of this ev'ning's story.
No fancy'd piece I bring from Greece or Rome;
'Tis grounded upon fact, and found at home.

Oft have the tragic writers grac'd the stage
With regal sorrows, or with sceptred rage:
To humbler roofs my muse delights to go,
Caught with sensations of domestic wo.
Spurn not the subject, nor despise the plan,
Because my hero is a poor plain man.
The villager as poignant feeling knows,
As underneath the ermin'd mantle glows.

My incidents, howe'er receiv'd, are new,
Copy'd from Nature's leaf, and wrote for you.
To gain your generous plaudit was my aim,
Your rich applause my wish'd-for goal of fame.

A gentle judgment to my firstling give:
And, though it merit censure, let it live.
If in its op'ning bud some symptoms show
Of future blossom, give it leave to blow;
With copious hand, into its leaves infuse
Your genial warmth, and breathe propitious dews;
And if, mature with age and culture grown,
It fruit produces, 'twill be all your own.



E P I L O G U E.

NOT speak an *Epilogue* ! Indeed I will :
 So rave and wrangle, rant and scold your fill.—
 Your kind applause has made our Bard so vain,
 That, as I live, I fear 'twill turn his brain.—
 Through five long acts to make me weep and rend,
 And not one line of chit-chat at the end ?
 'Tis monstrous hard ; nay, out of reason too—
 Ladies—and Gents—I here appeal to you. —

He says, 'Tis quite absurd,—'tis downright folly,
 To chace away that pleasing melancholy,
 That feeling which the Tragic scenes impart
 To the mild, sympathizing, moral heart,
 By letting the pert muse come tripping after,
 Exciting ill-tim'd mirth and ribald laughter.
 Nay, mangre all I urge, in spite of vogue,
 He still refuses me an *Epilogue*. —

His plea 'mongst some starch'd Dons may converts gain
 But with the major part 'twill prove in vain.
 Quite different sentiments I read among ye ;
 Consenting looks approve, I do not wrong ye.
 Then, since our Author needs so much inviting,
 You shall have one, that's flat, of my inditing.

The subject's obvious—I am to pray
 Your candour to preserve this infant play ;
 And yet I'm half inclin'd within myself,
 To beg you wou'd consign it to the shelf ;
 For, shou'd the banling have the luck to please,
 Farewell to all my hopes of future ease,
 My rib can never rest—To-morrow's sun
 Will view another Tragedy begun :
 Quebeck's fam'd siege, with Wolfe's untimely fall ;
 Wolfe *England's* glory and the dread of Gaul :
 Or *Wallace* wight, of an illustrious name ;
 WALLACE, the foremost on the lists of fame ;
 WALLACE, who nobly for his country fought,
 Who exil'd Liberty impatient sought,
 And to her vacant throne the banish'd goddess brought }
 Then, mercy on me—Ladies—if you know it,
 Rather lead apes in hell, than wed a poet.

'Tis inconceivable the life I've led,
 Since love of scribbling seiz'd my husband's head ;

Moping alone the live-long day he sits,
 Gaping at space—as if he'd lost his wits—
 When summon'd down with—Dinner waits, my dear—
 Hence hell-hounds! hence (he'd bawl) vengeance is
 near.—

And, ere I can recover my surprise,
 Chill'd are the pullets, or stone-cold the pies.

Oft has he wak'd me in the dead of night.
 My life half gone with terror and affright.
 Ope goes the curtains, to his desk he flies:
 I've got a thought, a noble thought, he cries.
 The lamp's gone out—quick, strike the latent spark,
 Else I shall lose the sentence in the dark.—

Nor since his piece was finish'd, have I quiet:
 Lank grows his visage, for untouch'd's his diet—
 What ails my love? why do you look so griev'd?—
 I wonder how my Play will be receiv'd.—

Courage, I cry; yourself have often known,
 In early years, the candour of the Town.
 Frequent they strove your drooping pow'r's to cheer,
 To curb each doubt, and check the rising fear:
 And surely now you'll more indulgence find;
 For I'll request it, and they must be kind.
 Each Critic shall his noisy cat-call spare,
 For Critics have been soften'd by the fair.

Ye dread of poets then, where'er you sit,
 Above, around, or rang'd in your own pit;
 Make good my promise now;—and you shall see,
 That, in return, I'll not ungrateful be.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

As performed at COVENT-GARDEN, LONDON.

LOCRINE,	Mr. Hull.	MORGAN,	Mr. Thompson.
BRENNUS,	Mr. Aicken.	ELIUD,	Mr. Young.
ELDRED,	Mr. Jackson.	EDWENA,	Mrs. Jackson
ELIDURE,	Mr. Lewis.	ELIZA,	Miss Ambrose.
	Guards,	Servants, &c.	

ELDRED;



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— — — — —
A C T I.

SCENE, A Grove.

The Curtain rising slowly to the symphony, discovers
EDWENA, who sings.

HA I L, god of war! to thee I sing;
Affuage my piercing woe:
My ELIDURE from dangers bring;
O save him from the foe!

Till he return, each pleasing shade
But aggravates my pain;
In vain I seek the matted glade,
The zephyr breathes in vain.

Cease, Philomel, thy lovely song,
Thy warbling charms no more;
The chanting of the flutt'ring throng
My peace can ne'er restore.

The dimpled rills that purl around,
In fruitless numbers play;
Give o'er your soothing plaintiff sound,
My ELIDURE's away.

[Comes forward and speaks.]

Cease, cease my song. In vain thy numbers strive
To chace away this melancholy gloom,
Whose sable mantle, shadowing the soul,
Presents a dreary prospect to the sight,
And spreads o'er Nature's works a dusky hue.
Why glows the blushing rose? Why flow'rs the thorn?
Why is the vale in verdant honours clad?
Sorrow's sad winter plucks their glories down,
And all things fade beneath my sick'ning woe,
To bloom, I fear, no more.—

Enter E L I Z A.

ELI. Why thus alone?
When through the house the face of gladness reigns,
Why thus do you this solitary walk
Incessant keep?

EDW. Why, dost thou say? Alas!
Why shou'd I not? Shou'd gaiety relax
The sad contracted furrows of my brow,
Then might'st thou wonder. Shame itself would blush
To view a cheerful smile upon my face,
While Fate, impending on the Saxon spears,
Shakes o'er the land; while friends and kinsmen fall
Before the cruel foe.

ELI. None more than I
Have reason to lament the rage of war.
I've felt its force. But now the storm blown o'er,
The thunder pass'd, and growling from afar,
In distant murmurs hushing to a calm,
Why shou'd we fear the angry bolt, or dread
The lightning's forceful flash? Hengist no more
Lays waste our fruitful vales; great Vortimer
Now gleans his scatter'd ranks; while Brennus here,
Ev'n in your father's house, bids safety welcome,
And peace return again.

EDW. Behold those fields—
How wild, how desolate their furrows show!
See that forsaken green, where erst the youths,
In sportive gambols, chae'd the hours away.
No sports are there; no human accents sound
To rouse imprison'd Echo from her cell,
Save some lone widow's wailing for her child,
Her husband murder'd, or her father slain.
Does this betoken peace? Yon lonely cot,
Once the gay mansion of the loveliest youth
That grac'd our Cambrian plains, where blyth content
And festive gladness dwelt, neglected now,
But one poor venerable man contains,
Whose nevertheless arm no more the state can serve;
Silent he sits beneath the lowly roof,
And wishful watches for his son's return.

ELI.

ELI. I wou'd not pry too deep into your thoughts ;
Your country's woes hang heavy on your mind :
But (or I'm much deceiv'd) a nearer tie
Claims your attention, and demands your care.
That youth has charms ; and you, too, have a heart.

EDW. Come near, Eliza.—Thou hast touch'd the
wound
Which rankles in my bosom. Yes, Eliza,
(I think I may unfold my heart to thee,
And safely lodge within thy faithful breast
My secret thoughts), in that dear absent youth
Centres the sum of all my hopes and wishes.
That Elidure's—my husband.

ELI. Gracious powers !
That is a circumstance beyond suspicion :
Tho' oft I've mark'd you partial in his praise,
And read your secret wishes in your looks ;
Yet still I thought the lowness of his rank
An obstacle not easy to surmount.

EDW. Virtues like his set Fortune at defiance,
Outsoar distinctions, and make envy dumb.
Hear then the story of our loves. The moon
Has scarce five times her monthly orbit run,
Since Dovey's streams in sanguine torrents flow'd
And let proud Hengist pass. Our heroes fled.
Fierce came the Saxon on. The hoary fire,
The helpless mother, and the speechless babe,
Fell victims to the ruthless rage of war.

ELI. Alas ! forgive me, Madam, if a while
I interrupt your story, and give vent
To tears that still involuntary stream
On mention of that day ; that fatal day
Which saw my father fall, and me cast out
A poor and helpless orphan to the world.

EDW. Dry up thy tears ; thou hast a parent here.
While life remains to animate this clay,
Whate'er my lot, my fortune thou shalt share,
My sister and my friend !—But let me on.
Flight was our only hope ; fear lent us wings,
And Snowdon's cliffs first saw the stragglers halt.
To reach the safest bulwark of the hill,
A river must be pass'd ; whose pent-up tide,
Dashing from rock to rock, rag'd foaming down.
A tree transverse was laid ; o'er which we sought,

By mutual aid to reach the farther bank;
 The midway gain'd, my head in giddy turn
 Ran fearful round. Trembling, my hold I lost;
 When, falling headlong in the rapid gulph,
 The roaring billows bore me senseless down.
 My father cried for help.— Astonish'd stood
 The stupified beholders.— Elidure
 Alone had courage to oppose the stream,
 And save thy sinking friend. Fearless, he rush'd
 Into the flood. His right hand grasp'd a rock;
 His left arm held me on the water's verge,
 Till aid was brought to lift me to the shore.

ELI. Brave youth! that noble act indeed demands
 Your warmest gratitude.

EDW. Hast thou beheld,
 When, glowing through my veins, rekindling life,
 Like a new morning, crimson'd o'er my cheek,
 What mix'd emotions sat on every brow,
 Of wonder and of joy. Returning day
 My opening eyes return'd. O then, my friend!
 What words can paint the feelings of my soul!
 The trembling youth, still clasping in his arms
 His prize preserv'd, uprear'd me from the earth,
 And to a parent gave his rescued child.
 Kind Heav'n, he cried, watch o'er my gracious lord,
 And ever thus from peril save your house.
 My father thank'd him. Thanks, methought seem'd poor,
 To one who gallantly had brav'd the flood;
 My life's redeemer, and my guardian God.

ELI. What else but love could recompense that deed,
 Or half repay such worth?

EDW. Eliza, no.
 Love's soft sensations in my virgin-breast
 Found yet no harbour. Gratitude alone,
 And friendly feelings, throbb'd around my heart,
 At Glas-Llynn's narrow pass our troops first knew
 That Hengist could be conquer'd. Vortimer,
 Collecting there his scatter'd force, resolv'd
 To make one last exertion, to redress
 His country's wrongs, or bravely sell his life.
 The Gods look'd kindly on: his arm prevail'd;
 And drove the haughty Saxon, vanquish'd, back.
 This gave us to our homes: but on our way,

While

While our hot youth chac'd the retiring foe,
A band in ambush clos'd upon the rear,
And well nigh turn'd the fortune of the day;
When Elidure, still watchful o'er thy friend,
With more than mortal arm withstood their charge,
Till strength arriv'd, and drove th' assailants off.
In this last conflict Elidure receiv'd
A dang'rous wound, which kept him many days
Confin'd at home, a stranger to the war.
Here, my Eliza, here it was I felt
The softer passion thrilling through my soul.
To bring relief, I sought his father's house;
Where oft, with wonder, I beheld his worth,
His valiant aspect, and his honest heart;
Heard the mild accent tremble on his tongue;
Read the soft silent wishes in his eye;
And look'd, and sigh'd, and reason'd into love.

ELI. When this shall be divulg'd, I dread——

EDW. Thy thoughts

I guess, and will anticipate thy fears.
Our lots in life so distant had been cast,
That it was scarce permitted me to make
A friendly visit to his father's roof,
Ev'n after all the service he had done me,
How then cou'd I expect a father's sanction
To grace our nuptial rites? By this induc'd
We strove to keep our marriage still unknown
To all, except the venerable sire
Who tied the sacred knot, till time should give
Some luckier crisis to disclose the secret.

ELI. Be well assur'd, it closely shall remain
Deep lodg'd within the foldings of my heart;
Not death itself should force it from my lips.

EDW. My present confidence declares how much
I think thee faithful to me. But new fear
Thy counsel claims, and calls thee to my aid.

ELI. Command my service and my life,

EDW.

This chief,

The warlike leader of Menevia's band,
Who waits but to refresh his weary men,
To lead 'em onward to the Cambrian camp,
His prince's fav'rite, and my father's friend,
Whose presence spreads festivity around,
Brings double weight of misery to me.

ELI.

ELI. I own, I thought his presence welcome to you.
The man who draws his sword in freedom's cause, and
Should find a friend in every honest breast.

EDW. So did he once in mine; so should he still,
If he but came in friendship's pleasing garb;
But oh! I fear he wears another form,
A form most blasting to my tortur'd view,
The baneful form of love.

ELI. That were indeed ———
But see he's here; and with him comes your fire,
In earnest conversation.

EDW. Yes, my friend;
And on their dread resolves, the life or death
Of poor Edwena rests. Hear me, good Heav'n!
Avert the direful stroke my fears suggest;
Or, if I must be tortur'd with his love,
With tenfold resolution arm my soul;
Teach me to ward the meditated blow,
Or strengthen me to bear a father's rage.
Preserve me virtuous; yield me spotless up,
Pure and unfully'd, to a husband's arms.
And now methinks I can endure the blast,
And weather out the fury of the storm.

Enter BRENNUS and LOCRINE.

Loc. I sought you, daughter. Why in silent mood
Dost thou neglect the converse of thy friends,
Quitting the pleasures of the social hour,
To visit this wild solitary gloom?
The times, and our own exigence, require
That I consult thee on a serious point,
On which our future happiness depends.
I have no child but thee; and fain my eyes
Would gaze upon a prattling race of thine,
Whose infant-gambols might assuage the pain
Of sick'ning age, and rising to the war,
Under the eye of a renowned sire,
Learn to defend the liberty they prize.
This gallant chief, our guest, of noble race,
Possesses all my ardent wishes form;
I choose him for my son. My choice, I hope,
Will also prove acceptable to you.

EDW.

EDW. My father, I am your's, at your high will,
And no alternative remains for me.

Yet, as it is a matter of such moment,—

So unexpected too—Your arm, Eliza!—

LOC. How fares my child?—Edwena!—

EDW.

Sir, your pardon.—

My scatter'd spirits crave a moment's pause;

Permit me to withdraw.

[Exit with Eliza.]

BREN.

Suspicion tells me,

Your daughter's wishes, adverse to our hopes,

Will prove a bar to my expected bliss,

Security o'erlook'd,

LOC.

Your doubts are vain.

'Twas but her virgin terror; fearful most,

Of what she most desires. 'Twill soon away.

However, to dispel your apprehension,

I'll follow, and endeavour to remove

The weight which now depresses her young spirits;

That, when you see her next, she may receive

Your proffer'd vows, with kindness, and with love.

BREN. I'll take a view of the adjoining vale,

And follow straight.—

[Exit Lacrine.]

Her maiden fear!—Perhaps

It may be so. I oft-times have observ'd,

When sudden palpitations from the heart,

Of joy excessive, grief, or quick surprise,

Shoot through the quiv'ring fibres of the flesh;

The lazy blood creeps slowly thro' the veins,

Dams up each sluice, and for a moment stops

The active pow'rs of life. Who's there?

Enter MORGAN.

MOR. My lord! my master!

BREN.

Raise thee from the earth,

My soldier, and my friend! But say, from whence?

I thought thee dead.

MOR.

So was I thought by all.

I fell, and senseless lay upon the field;—

Some feeble symptoms of remaining life

Were seen by one who kindly rais'd me up,

Convey'd me to a cot, and soon restor'd

My wonted strength. I follow'd to the war,

But found you not: there waiting your arrival,

Too near the foe incautious I advanc'd,

And, captive made, was carried to their camp.

BREN. Dispatch'd by Vortimer to scour the vales
That southward lie; returning here, my troops,
With sickness and repeated toil o'ercome,
Demanded rest. But how hast thou escap'd?

MOR. Hengist, to gain some knowledge of our
strength,
Commanded me before him; where, consign'd
Unto the rack, I told whate'er I knew.
On naming you, the Saxon offer'd life,
Nay, promis'd too, advancement and rewards,
Could I with you promote a private league
Of amity.—

BREN. Of amity!

MOR. My lord,
Beset with perils, what cou'd I refuse?
This paper my commission will unfold.

[Gives a letter to Brennus.]

BRENNUS reads.

"Greeting, and health, the Saxon king presents
"To Brennus, the renowned British chief;
"Whose wisdom dreaded, and whose valour tried,
"Persuade him to promote and seek his friendship.
"The bearer will convey the terms to

HENGIST.

What terms? propos'd he nothing?

MOR.

No, my Lord:

He bids you stipulate your own conditions;
Declaring, nothing your desires can form,
Out-stepping not the circle of his pow'r
Shall stop the league he meditates.

BREN.

Inform me,

For thou hast view'd their host, and best can judge;
Dost thou believe the Saxons can prevail
O'er Vortimer's successful bands?

MOR.

Too sure,

If human reason can suggest, they must.
Ev'n now, not far from Mouthy's ruin'd walls,
In sight of our long harras'd ranks, they lie
Entrench'd in many a bulwark; and but wait
Th' arrival of an army on its march,
To pour, once more, in torrents o'er the land.

BREN. To-morrow thou shalt bear our answer back:
Mean time, while you refresh your weary'd limbs,
I'll meditate, and give thee my resolves.

MOR. I'm ever at your call.

BREN. Anon I'll see thee——

[*Exit Morgan.*]

Conjoin with Hengist, or embrace the fate
Of Vortimer? Which way shall I resolve?
The one comes fraught with death, and fame unfelt
To grace my senseless clay: The other stamps
Disgrace upon my name, but promises
A lengthen'd life of pleasure and of pow'r.
Yet who shall speak in censure, or in praise?
My country carnag'd, who shall sound my deeds,
Or point the place that yielded me a grave?
The Saxon join'd, and seated in my strength,
Who'll dare to mention the insidious act
Which lifted me to grandeur?—Then, to die,
Or to survive, is the great doubt within.
And can I quit the harvest of my joy,
With plenteous produce whit'ning to my view,
Smiling with ease, and rip'ning into bliss?

No: I'll renounce the shock of war's alarms,
And find my peace in fair *Edwena's* arms;
Sport o'er the mountain, range the flowry grove,
And revel in the sweets of social love.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

A C T II.

SCENE, *A Hall.* LOCKRINE, *Solus.*

TH E more I think, the more I am convinc'd,
That something nearer hangs around her heart,
Than virgin terrors, or the sudden shock
Which unexpected rous'd her youthful fears.
Oft have I mark'd th' involuntary tear
Spring in her pensive eye, while all alone
Silent she sought the thickest of the grove.
Reprov'd, and question'd of the cause, she gave
As reason for her sadness, that the fears
Of hostile dangers not yet quite subsided,
Depress'd those sprightly fallies that were wont
To spread soft mirth and pleasantry around.
Still I believ'd her, 'till on this occasion
Her strong emotions stagger'd my opinion.
This rustic youth who serv'd her in our flight,

B

Has

Has surely wrought upon her gteaful heart.—
 Away, detested thought—her dignity
 Would save her from a passion fo unworthy,
 So mean and grov'ling in the world's regard,
 This interview ſhe promiſes with Brennus,
 Muſt ſoon, however, clear theſe anxious doubts.
 But hold—he comes—he muſt not know my fears.

Enter B R E N N U S.

Your walk, my friend, was longer than expected.
 No accident, I hope, detain'd you from us?

B R E N. The pleaſing ſcenes, romantic to the view,
 Farther entic'd me onwards through the vale,
 Regardless of the hours.—Your daughter's health
 Ere this, I hope, is mended?

Loc. Quite reſtor'd.

But much ſhe gives the ill-tim'd accident
 Which forc'd her ſo abruptly to depart,
 And ſpeedily in perſon means to plead
 Her own excuſe.

B R E N. I ſhall attend her will
 With anxious joy.

Loc. All doubts will vaniſh then.
 But tell me, Sir, how ſtand in your eſteem
 The ſoil and ſituation of my lands?

B R E N. The beſt I ever look'd on; far extend
 Beyond my ken the bounds of your poſſeſſions?

Loc. The vales that meet beneath thoſe ſlanting
 groves,

And thence meand'ring cleave the pebbled beach,
 From whence the water iſſues from the ſod
 'Till in the briny flood its taſte is loſt,
 Acknowledge me their Lord: one paltry farm
 Alone excepted, which maliciously
 Intrudes itſelf within my circling fence,
 That lowly roof beneath the tuſted brow,
 With yon ſmall wood, and thoſe adjoining grounds
 That ſkirt the river downward to the bridge,
 As a foul wen upon the human frame
 Diſfigures the ſoft touch of nature's work,
 So that ſmall cot, offensive to the proſpect,
 Leſſens the beauty of my fair domain.

B R E N. 'Tis ſomething ſtrange, indeed, ſo ſmall a
 tract,
 Cloſe in your view, nay almoſt at your gate,

Shou'd own another master; But to whom
Does it belong?

Loc. An obstinate old man,
Who by his own hard labour thence extorts
A bare subsistence, breeding up a son,
An active youth, now in the Cambrian camp.

BREN. Have you proposed to purchase it?

Loc. I have
Most frequently; but still with surly pride
He has refus'd — There is no price, he cries,
Can e'er prevail upon me to relinquish
My little home bequeath'd me by my poor,
But honest father. —

BREN: Take it then by force.—

Enter SERVANT.

Whence this intrusion?

SER. Sir, from Vortimer
A messenger, but now in haste arriv'd
Desires to be admitted.

BREN. Bid him enter—

[Exit Servant.]

We'll talk of that anon.

Loc. When it shall suit
Your meetest leisure to resume the subject,
I leave you to receive the royal mandate ;
Its purport may require your privacy.

BREN. I have no secrets now apart from you;
Retire not then through ceremonious form:
He brings some news, perhaps:

Loc. Whate'er his tidings,
If such as may be trusted to my hearing,
Yourself at leisure, shall impart 'em to me.
It should be so.

BREN. In all things you command—
[Exit Locrine]

[Exit Locrine

The king perhaps now sends to urge my march ;
To that my answer is prepar'd at full.

Enter ELIDURE.

ELI. Great Sir
By royal Vortimer's command I come,
Charg'd with the utmost speed to find you out,
And in his highness' name to greet you well.

BREN. Declare his will.

ELI. Thus then he bids me say
 The sally'd Saxons with increasing numbers
 On Bedwin's summit still securely lie;
 Expecting, as by scouts he is inform'd,
 A powerful reinforcement; which arriv'd,
 Once more, 'tis thought, they mean to offer battle:
 He therefore wills you hasten to his aid
 With all your force.

BREN. Commend me to my prince
 In humblest terms of duty and respect—
 Tell him, this expedition has so worn
 My men with weary watchings and fatigue,
 That I was fain to halt 'em here a while
 To give 'em strength to prosecute their march.
 Besides, a circumstance of private nature
 Occasions some delay.

ELI. What said you, Sir!
 Of private nature?—At a time like this
 All private benefits are public frauds.
 Perish the man, who, when his country calls
 To snatch her from the gripe of fell oppression,
 To save a wife, a parent, or a child,
 From bondage or from death, would basely dare
 But to indulge a thought for private ends,
 His own preferring to the public weal.

BREN. You are too bold, young man—learn what
 becomes you.

ELI. Your pardon, Sir; I meant not to offend.

BREN. Some three days hence, I may inform the
 king

How soon my proms'd succours will arrive,
 As then I shall have muster'd all my force.

You have your answer, Sir, and may depart.

ELI. With all respect, I humbly take my leave.

[Exit Elidure.]

BREN. Who there?

[Enter Servant.]

SER.

My Lord!

BREN. Send Morgan to my chamber.

I'll meet him there—The times require dispatch

[Exit Servant.]

In my resolves—If I defer this league—

But soft—Edwena comes! her sweet approach
 Dispells all other thoughts; and gently tunes
 Each harsh alarm, to soft'ning sounds of love.

Enter LOCRINE and EDWENA.

Loc. I have been pleading in your favour, Sir,
With all the mildness of a parent's love,
And a fond father's soft severity.

Bren. My life depends upon your suit.

Loc. I leave

Her to reply.—Daughter you know my mind ;
Act as your duty and my peace require.

Edw. I shall endeavour, Sir, to bear myself
As it may best become me.

Loc. That is well.

And kindly spoken.

[Exit Locrine.]

Bren. It o'erjoys me, Madam,
To see your wonted spirits reassume
Their kindly rule. Words wou'd attempt in vain
To paint the anxious feelings of a heart
That throbb'd for your relief.

Edw. Your kind concern
Demands from me my warmest thanks. I hope
I stand excus'd, or blameless in your thoughts,
For my so sudden and abrupt departure.

Bren. Excus'd thou lovely fair one ! what cou'd e'er
Escape from thee, (all perfect as thou art),
In word or thought, requiring an excuse ?
I am a soldier, bred to hoarser sounds
Than soothing notes of compliment and love ;
Else cou'd I dwell whole years upon thy praise,
And, still untir'd prolong the rapt'rous theme.
Yet, were I fraught with softest eloquence,
The lapsing time permits no more than this :
Your charms have caught my heart ; your father's will
Kindly complies ; and nothing now remains,
But your concurrence, to complete my bliss.

Edw. Thus low, I thank you for the honour meant me,
Which far my little merit over-rates ;
And, as I wish not to excite your hopes,
Or give you one unnecessary doubt,
With the same frankness you have used to me,
I'll freely ope the dictates of my soul.—
Know, then, our hearts were never form'd to join
In the kind cordial ties of nuptial love.
If, therefore, the few graces I can boast,
View'd by your partial eye, have lighted up

A pure, disinterested noble flame,
Display that in-born virtue of the mind,
Now shew the friend, th' admirer, and the man.

My father bids me listen to your suit,
Or forfeit ever his paternal favour :
O save me, then, from the severest ill
That can befall a child ! from the hard need
Of thwarting a fond parent in his hopes.
Thus prostrate, I implore you to devise
Some means to frustrate this intended union,
Some obstacle as rising from yourself ;—
And leave me here, as when your eyes first view'd me,
The duteous daughter of a tender fire.

BREN. This posture ill becomes thee, charming fair ;
Rise, powerful pleader —By my country's gods,
The more thou talk'st against my growing passion,
The more thou dost endear thee to my love.
How shall I soften thy obdurate heart,
And work upon thy will ?—For life itself
Were vain, and worthless, if posses'd without thee.—
Thou shalt be mine—Produce that pow'r on earth
Shall dare to snatch thee from my ravish'd hopes.

EDW. A pow'r thou wilt not contradict.

BREN. Name it.

EDW. Thy own resolves.

BREN. Thou speak'st in riddles.

EDW. Let me

Expound 'em to thee :—know, my heart's engag'd,
And my whole soul devoted to another.

BREN. Perdition to my hopes !

EDW. And though, I fear,

I am not to expect within thy breast

A kind compunction for my keen distress,
Yet wilt thou have some feeling for thyself,
Nor wish to keep the mansion of a heart,
Its owner not within.

BREN. I'll hazard that ;

The person once secur'd the mind may stay,

Or follow it at leisure.—Well I know,

The childish fondness of this love-fit gone,

And girlish prejudices once remov'd,

Thou'lt thank me for the kind compulsion done thee.

EDW. Insulting man !—

BREN:

BREN. But show me this admir'd,
This happy wretch.—I'll set aside my pow'r,
And fairly meet in arms this favour'd rival,
That we may prove who best deserves thy love.

EDW. Thou canst not meet him upon equal terms:
His fires would flash intolerable day
Upon thy drooping flame;—his valour wou'd
Appal thee with its touch;—his virtue shine
Above thy worth, as Heaven surpasses earth.

BREN. I'd meet this man of men, and face these odds
One great Advantage gleaming on my side
Out-weighs a giant's strength:—thou dost forget,
A fathers sanction and a father's will
Declare for me, and both shall be exerted
To force thy stubborn temper to compliance.

[Exit Brennus.]

EDW. Exert 'em, then;—strain ev'ry boasted art,
To rouse a parent's rage:—still shalt thou find
How well a woman's heart, enthron'd in truth,
Will fearless dare thee to the hateful test.

[Exit Edwena.]

SCENE changes to a Grove.

Enter ELIDURE.

What is the cause, I cannot well divine;
But from my heart I do not like this Brennus.
There's something, surely, couch'd in his reply
Beyond my Fathom.—Yet I was to blame,
To shew my warmth so much on the occasion—
But still, I know not how, resiftless rushes
The swelling indignation through my veins,
Prompting my youthful tongue, whene'er I find
Such luke warm languor in my country's cause,
Or such a cold reply—But let it rest
A while.—One moment I may surely spare,
Uncensur'd by my country or my king,
To the all-pow'rful ties of yearning nature,
To glad the eye of an indulgent parent,
And snatch one tender look from a fond wife
Who pines in secret for my wish'd return.—
I'm told she pass'd this way;—she visits, sure,
The oaken grove.—I'll seek the well-known shade,

To

To find the drooping fair, to ease her doubts
And clasp her in a husband's fond embrace.

[*Exit Elidure.*]

SCENE *changes to another part of the Grove*

Enter EDWENA crossing the stage, and sitting down
upon a green bank.

EDW. Welcome, thou sylvan scene, thou leafy grove,
Beneath whose silent shade my Elidure
In accents bland oft op'd his copious heart,
Teeming with virtuous love — Thou hoary oak,
His faithful confidant, thy moss-grown ribs,
Significant in look, speak to my soul
Firmness and strength ; and pensive in thy gloom,
Thou spread'st a sympathizing shade around,
Grateful to melancholy — Here sit me down,
Here mourn my luckless fate, and ceaseless weep
The absence of my love, my lord, my Elidure.

Enter ELIDURE.

ELI. Behold him at thy feet.

EDW. Ye gracious powers !

ELI. Compose thyself, my love ! — dismiss thy doubts ;
Thy Elidure returns in safety back,
To gaze with transport on thy beauteous form,
And press thee in the circling folds of love.

EDW. And art thou then ? — and art thou surely here ?
I can't persuade my eyes to think this real.
Let me look on thee — 'Tis, I'm not deceiv'd,
It is my love, my life, my dear, dear husband !
Just at this time, propitious pow'r's ! to send him ;
It is too much to bear ; the rapt'rous bliss
Attacks my brain ; I shall run mad with joy.

ELI. My all of life ! my everlasting love !
Thou soft, thou bright inspirer of my soul !
Try to divest thee of these dear emotions,
And let this storm, this wild excess of rapture,
Subside into the smooth of Reason's calm ;
For we must early part.

EDW. Part ! — Said'st thou, Part ?

O show me not Elysium's blissful plains,
Then blast me with a prospect dread and wild.
No, we will part no more — Here will I hold thee ;
Not here a father's menaces can reach me.

ELI.

ELI. Hear me, my life—Thy passions crowd thy sight
With fancy'd ills.—I go but to remove
Those bars that hold me from thy father's sanction
To take thee to my arms.—The smiling Gods
Have crow'd already, with successful deeds,
My youthful efforts;—and, inspir'd by thee,
The little service I have done my prince
Has gain'd his early notice. Hither sent
His messenger, I come to hasten Brennus—

EDW. Brennus!

ELI. What means that sudden start, Edwena,
On mention of that name?

EDW. Nothing, my love.

ELI. Nay, but it does; else why more faintly glows
The ruby of thy lip? why silent fleet
Those pearly drops adown thy lovely cheeks?

EDW. I fear'd new teeming dangers to the state
Had caus'd this sudden message to the chief.

ELI. I know that is not all; for dangers long
Have been familiar to thy fearful ear.
Then, by our loves, by our chaste nuptial rites,
And by a husband's tie upon thy will,
Relate the whole that preys upon thy soul.

EDW. Forgive me that I wish'd to hide my sufferings,
And to conceal from thee a circumstance
Full fraught with terrifying doubts.

ELI. Be quick,
And O relieve me of my pain.

EDW. Know then—
Alas! my tears o'erflow, and choke my words.

ELI. I charge thee, speak; my doubts will else
distract me.

EDW. Know then, our guest even from his first arrival,
View'd me with looks that fill'd me with alarms,
I form'd excuses to avoid his sight;
Till forc'd at last to listen to his tale,
He shock'd me with a tender of his love.

ELI. Down, down, rebelling rage!—Go on, go on.

EDW. Repell'd, he still persisted in his suit,
Nor heeded the engagements of my heart;
Ev'n dar'd, beneath the sanction of a parent,
To threat'n me with an enforc'd espousal

ELI. Hear me great Heav'n—O strike him instant
dead;

Or if some plagues, beyond all human ken,
Conceal'd remain in your great hoard of vengeance,
Edge them with pains acute, and let them pour
In aggravated horrors on his head.

EDW. Nay, now you are too rash; let patience rule.

ELI. Away with Patience! 'tis advice misplac'd.
When force wou'd violate a husband's right,
The gift of patience were the loss of honour.
Can I behold thee, lovely as thou art,
My life's best gem, the treasure of my soul,
Torn from me by the sacrilegious hand
Of brutal violation—calmly look on,
And view the dire disgrace with tame submission?
No: ye just ruling gods, fill me brim-full
With great revenge.

EDW. These passions rend my soul.
Why will you fly into such gusts of rage?
How easy we to others counsel give,
But want it in our own sore time of need.
My little transports, at thy dear return,
Were interruptions to the lesser claims
Of Time's necessity: yet when thou seest
Superior terrors black'ning o'er our heads,
Fearfully dreadful, rashly to give way
To Fury's frantic force, when o'er the mind
Fair Prudence shou'd exert her wisest sway
To free us from these terrifying doubts;
Believe me, love, 'tis wrong it is unkind.

ELI. Chide on, my life;—let me offend again,
Again to hear the mild severity,
In soothing accents, soften on thy tongue—
I cou'd recline me on this gentle bosom
Till I forgot the dangers that surround us;
No more remember the disastrous bars
That thwart our nuptial loves.—O speak!
Attentive now I wait thy wise resolves.

EDW. Thy warmth wou'd not permit me to relate,
That Brennus knows not where my heart is lodg'd;
Which shelters thee from his severe displeasure.
That circumstance but in our last extremity
Must be reveal'd—Soon as the hazy ev'ning
Has spread o'er Idris top her twilight wing,
Where yon brown rock o'erhangs the busy brook,

There

There will I meet thee:—but before I come,
I'll try my utmost efforts with my father
To shun this union, or at least defer
The hated purpose 'till the chief's return.
Meanwhile, perhaps, the gods may raise thy name
By some great act achiev'd against the foe
For which my pray'r's to heav'n shall still be pour'd;
When, soaring high with valour and renown,
Thou may'st look downward upon Locrine's daughter.

ELI. By heav'n, the thought dilates my young ideas,
And, with high boding hopes, uplifts my soul,
Expanding into glory. God of war!
Inspire the dastard foe to leave the holds
In which they lurk; that, singling from the ranks
Their tow'ring chief, undaunted I may rush,
Tear from his helm the variegated plume,
And shew whose veins, the Saxons chiefs or mine,
In nobler currents bear the circling blood.

EDW. I know thou wilt: and I, perhaps, may see it;
May view thee lovely in the ranks of war;
Behold the smile of conquest on thy brow;
And, mingling in the cheerful sounds of peace,
Around thy temples twine the wreath of glory.
For shou'd my fire, inexorable still,
Relentless view my sorrows and my tears,
I'll meet thee, love, to share thy doubtful fate,
And, through the dark vicissitudes of life,
Embrace thy perils, or partake thy joys.
But now the time forbids thee to reply;
An envious eye, malignant to our wishes,
Might blast our fairest hopes. Retire, my love;
Anon we meet again.

ELI. Thou wilt not fail?

EDW. If life remains, I will not. Fare thee well.

ELI. Let me not wait thee long.

EDW. Thou shalt not, love.

I'll seize the first occasion to retire;
That, if necessity requires our flight,
Ere morning dawns we may escape the search
Of all inquiry.

ELI. Dearest life, adieu—

Kind heav'n, that guards the virtuous, watch thy steps,
And O preserve and take thee to its care!

[Exit Elidure.]

EDW. Amen.—Protect me, Pow'rs! for now draws on
The crisis of my fate—Shrink not, my heart!
A husband's comfort, and thy own existence,
Are now at stake;—for them thou art to plead.

Teach me, great Nature! thy all powerful skill,
To soothe the rigour of a parent's will;
With dutious firmness his resolves to move,
And melt him with the tears of filial love. *[Exit.*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

A C T III.

S C E N E, *A Hall.*

Enter BRENNUS, a Servant following.

BRENNUS.

GO tell your master I attend him here.—*Exit. Ser.*
She must, and shall, be mine; for O I feel
Her charms have rais'd a flame within my soul,
Which nothing but possession can assuage!
If I can urge her father to pursue
His present purpose, her unyielding heart
Shall nought deter me. Should he waver once,
I have the will and means to make her mine;
And Hengist's favour sets me above fear.
But that must be my ultimate resource;
I thereby forfeit the esteem of Locrine,
And quit perhaps pretensions to her fortune.
No trifling object that—No, I must try
All means to keep the father in my favour.
This farm he covets!—that may something work
To fix him mine. Its owner shall consent,
Or plead his grievance in the world below.
The father comes. Can I persuade him once
To fix an early period for our marriage,
I shall not fear to keep him to his word.

Enter LOCRINE.

Loc. My noble friend, I wait upon your will

BRENNUS. Your beauteous daughter, Sir—

Loc. Is your's. Henceforth

I call you son.

BRENNUS. Heav'n and my raptur'd heart
Only can tell how much the honour'd sound
Delights my ears. But, Sir, the lady's choice—

Loc. Her choice! how is her giddy choice concern'd
Where a wise father's just and prudent will,
Matur'd with reason, by experience form'd,
Directs her lot in life?—This girlish flame,
By childish folly fed, will soon evaporate
In mild reflection—quench'd by nuptial love
And your endearing fondness.

BREN. May I ask,
Who is this rival of my hopes?

Loc. As yet
I have not learn'd; nor in her present temper
Choose I to make inquiry. If suspicion
Would let me guess, it is a beardless boy,
Who in our expedition did her service.
A whim of childish gratitude, forsooth,
Not worth our notice.

BREN. You have seen her then,
It seems, since our late interview?

Loc. I have;
And from herself distinctively receiv'd
Your conversation's purport. Now I left her
With solemn charge, and fatherly injunction
To reconcile her wishes to her duty,
And to prepare for her approaching nuptials.

BREN. How shall I thank you for your generous aid
Thus kindly interposing in my favour?

Loc. No more, my son. My wishes are o'erpaid
By adding to the number of those names
That grace my family, a man of worth,
Of honour, and of courage to defend
From hostile insults, or from private wrongs,
My house's dignity.—Your worth once known,
My daughter, red'ning with a conscious blush,
Shall wonder at her childish efforts made
To blast her worldly bliss.

BREN. My utmost care
Shall be exerted to deserve your favour,
And win your daughter's love.

Loc. I doubt it not.

BREN. But tell me, Sir; with anxious fearfulness,
I ask; Have you yet fix'd within your mind
Our nuptial day? The messenger, but now
In haste arriv'd, request's my speedy march;

I cannot,

I cannot, therefore, long excuse my stay
With just pretence.

LOC. The third returning sun,
With your consent, shall view the happy hour.

BREN. Impatiently I wait the wish'd event,
Mean time my place, my counsel, and my strength,
Shall strain their weary'd faculties, to gain
The ultimate completion of your wish.

Enter a SERVANT.

SER. Old Eldred, Sir—

LOC. The man you wish'd to see.
Conduct him in.

[Exit Servant.]

We'll sound him on the subject,
And form our future plan from the result.

Enter ELDRÉD.

Health and good fortune crown the prosp'rous days
Of my great lord.—I fear I do intrude?—

LOC. Not so—thou art most welcome; tell me what
Makes thee my house's visitor to day?

ELD. This morn, before the cock with cheerly note
Had, thrice proclaiming, hail'd the coming day,
And warn'd its master to his early care,
I rose and listen'd to the teeming rain,
And the loud whistling of the hollow blast
That shook my little hovel—till, subsiding,
The whit'ning clouds in sightless atoms fled,
Presenting to my ken the gladsome blue,
And Idris cliffs in glist'ning sun-beams clad.

I pac'd the pasture slowly to the brook,
Which then I found foaming in angry mood,
And fighting with its banks—The boiling element
Too quarrelsome my angle to admit,
I could but look and wonder at the flood.
Its mounds o'erpass'd, onward the torrent came,
Eddying around the mead—A rushy hill
Yet nodded on the surge, within whose covert
My aged eyes distinctly could perceive
A fearful hare—The trembling creature rose,
And, leaning on the rushes for support,
Fell frighted in—Plunging, she sought the land,
Where anxiously I stood—Op'ning my arms,
The little animal approach'd me near,
And swam into my grasp.

LOC. Didst thou destroy it?

ELD. Not for the boundless world—Poor fool! says I,
Thou know'st not where thou com'st. Cautious, thou
shun'st

A wat'ry death, and swim'st to man for safety;
Man, more destructive to thy timid race,
Than all thy other enemies of nature—
But fear not me; there shall no harm come to thee:
Had I the means, I'd fence for thee a field,
Feed thee with care, and save thee from the gins
Of savage mortals, or the hawk's fell pounce.—
But all I can, I'll do—I'll carry thee
To a fair mistress, the lov'd Edwena.
Thou'lt be a partner for her little fawn,
Eat from her snowy hand, and fearless hear
The hallooing hunter or the op'ning hound.—

LOC. Hast thou yet seen my daughter?

ELD. No, my lord;

I hear her health permits not—Gracious Heav'n,
Prolong her years, to bless your latter life
With comfort and with joy!—

LOC. Thanks, gentle Eldred.
Was it, old man,—when last I saw thee here—
I think it was—we some time held discourse
Concerning thy estate? Perhaps ere this
Thou'lt better thought: I'll still make good my offer.

ELD. Why will you touch upon the only string
That jars upon the sense? I've told you oft.
My little hovel was my little all;
My all of wordly wealth, my all of life.—
Suppose a stranger traversing these vales,
That gentleman, for instance, or some other,
And fancying the beauty of your house,
Should say to you—This likes me for a home;
Propose your price for it, and there's your gold—
Would you relinquish your delightful spot,
Your morning's pleasure, and your mid-day's joy,
To waste your ev'ning in a land of sorrow?—

LOC. That case is different.—

ELD. How differs it,
My lord, from mine? It may in magnitude,
But not in semblance—This aspiring dome,
Your blushing gardens, and your waving groves,

Are not of more significance to you,
Than are to me my lowly lattic'd shed,
My taper'd holly, and my whit'ning thorn.

Loc. Thy argument is founded upon error.
My mansion quitted cou'd not be replac'd
With one more elegant, or useful to me :
For thy mean cot, I offer thee such worth
As wou'd procure for thee a fair retreat,
Provide thee dainties, and prolong thy life
With heartfelt ease and lasting happiness.

ELD. With happiness ? can you ensure me that ?
I fear me, no !—that is not your's to give.
Our happiness, concentred in the mind,
By no criterion can be fix'd or try'd ;
Imperfect still in its most perfect state ;
And to enjoy it pure, without allay,
Were not to be a Mortal.—You, my lord,
Though feasting at the table of profusion,
With envious eye behold my oaten cake.—
I with my frugal meal enjoy content,
One step before you in the road to bliss ;
But still there is a something unpossess'd—
My son, my age's darling, facing death
In ev'ry horrid shape, will force a sigh ;
Will keep my eye unclos'd upon my pillow.

BREN. 'Tis mine to aid thee there.—I can procure
His absence from the camp, and send him home.

ELD. But how !—Ingloriously !—So judge me Heav'n !
I'd rather view him breathless on his bier,
And tell the wounds upon his manly breast,
Than see him loiter indolently here,
When my great country's wrongs demand his sword.

BREN. I'll give him honour, and promote his rank.

ELD. Canst thou give him courage ?—That's the staff
Of blooming glory.—Canst thou give him virtue ?—
That's the flag of fame.—Devoid of those,
How canst thou give him honour ?—having them,
How canst thou hold it from him ?—'Tis not, Sir,
An empty sound, a feather, or a badge,
But worth alone that dignifies the blood.—
My boy, I hope, inherits that within,
Will, unassisted, find its way to notice,
Or my old lectures have been thrown away.—

When

When these invaders threat'ned first our vales,
My sword, in peace long rusting o'er the hearth,
I buckled to his side, and gave this lesson—
My son, thy country calls for aid—that sword,
Once this old arm's acquaintance seeks thy grasp.
Unsheath'd, let strength and justice guide the blow.
Victorious, still to mercy lend an ear;
And if thy rising virtues ere should call thee
To the great nation's senate, then remember
That honesty's thy only agent there—
This makes the chief, the hero, and the man!

BREN. This mode of speech ill suits thy poor be-
seeming,

And far out-soars the teaching of a rustic;
Hast thou e'er served in battle?

ELD. Yes, I have,
And weather'd many a wearisome campaign;
But not amidst these hills.—Our streams were then
Unting'd with native red—we fought the enemy
Close at their ships. O that the youthful blood
Wou'd rolling back, re-animate these veins,
As when on the Brigantian shore we fought
Unequal numbers!—By your fire I stood;
A rocky fragment bore him prostrate down.
Before him straight I plung'd into the waves;
Up to my sides I plung'd.—The steely storm
Burst harmless o'er my head.—Your father rose,
Our ranks rejoin'd, and drove the frightened host
To seek for safety in their floating tow'rs.—
There at a distance they beheld our land
With longing looks; but intestine feuds now
Sapping our vitals, eat our sinews through,
And give a willing entrance to the foe.

LOC. This circumstance I've heard from thee before;
'Tis foreign to our purpose.—

ELD. Sir, your pardon;
You must excuse the foible of my years.
Whene'er the conversation winds my thoughts
To youthful recollection, from the heart
The feeble stream that feeds my eye of life
In gurgling bubbles seeks its former course,
With age long parch'd; yet ere the crazy wheel

Of motion turns, the wasting current stops.—
Your leave, Sir, to withdraw.

Loc. Thou wilt not then
Comply with my request?

ELD. Let me not say,
I will not;—no, my kind Lord,—I cannot.—
Heav'n turn your thoughts from wishing me such sorrow.
My father's shade would haunt me for the deed.—
His dying words I never can forget.—
"Twixt broken groans, with falt'ring voice he cry'd,
I soon must part with thee, my dearest Eldred,
And all the comforts of my little home.
In early days I drank some sweets of glory,
And tasted too the bitters of a court.
To find repose in the decline of life,
I sought my rural cot; where soft content
A frugal board, and thy dear company—
Thou Image of thy mother!—gave me blifs,
In affluence unknown.—Thi scanty patrimony,
All which the grasp of greedy faction left me—
He would have said—I charge thee still preserve—
His look confess'd it: but a deep-fetch'd sigh
Cut short his words, and shrouded him in death.
Then let these eyes grow dim within the hatch,
That wept my father's exit.—May you enjoy
Your days in ease, and may your last remains
Rest with the relics of your sacred fires. [*Exit Eldred.*]

Loc. Well, my son, what think you of this peasant?

BREN. There's danger in the man: he ought not, Sir,
To breathe the air so closely to your dwelling,

Loc. Point out the means by which I may prevent it.

BREN. Pronounce the word—I have within my call,
A friendly hand will rid you of his presence.

Loc. That must not be:—for though I cou'd with
ease

Frown him to dust, and seize upon my wish;

Yet shou'd not force exert its iron form,

To stigmatize the deed with cruelty,

Besides, it were not safe: he's much belov'd—

The son he mentions, too, with youthful feats

Has won the Hearts of the young peasantry.

Cou'd some device be found with justice veil'd—

BREN. Believe it done:—I will about it straight.

[*Exit Brennus.*]

Loc. Speed thy intents, my son;—for such the hate
I bear within my soul to this old rustic,
That, till I find the means to move him hence,
My sleep will be unsound.—Nor are his lands
The only cause of the dislike I bare him—
This son of his has surely wrought upon
The grateful sense of my deluded child;
And though I seemed to Brennus but to slight
Her shyness to his suit, yet was it but
A seeming; for numberless the reasons are
That wake my fears. Wou'd I were satisfied!
Who waits?

[Enter Servant.

SER.

My Lord!

Loc.

Inform the fair Eliza

I'd speak with her.

[Exit Servant.

She something surely knows,
And will not fail to tell me her observings.
If facts do justify me fears, by heav'n
The son and fire shall both severely feel
The fatal force of my deserved displeasure.

Enter ELIZA:

Loc. Come near, Eliza. I esteem thee much,
I lov'd thy father well; and that regard
Is now transferred to thee. I do believe
Thou wou'd'st not see me plunging in perplexity,
If it were thine to free me from my doubts.

ELIZ. Be most assur'd I would not.

Loc.

Know then, Eliza,

My fears persuade me, that old Eldred's son
Is the mean object of my daughter's wish.
I did not think she wou'd have stoop'd so low;
But yet suspicions strongly point it to me.
Has aught relating to it reach'd thy knowledge?

ELIZ. I grieve to think you shou'd suspect me, Sir,
Of any thing inclining to connivance
At what must give your heart a moment's pain.

Loc. No, no; I know thou wou'd'st not. You'll
excuse

The needless question; for my fears suggest
Thoughts even beyond belief. But say, Eliza,
Has he been seen by her to-day?

ELIZ. To-day!

Loc. Yes; I am told he was the messenger
Who came from Vortimer. Saw'st thou him not?

ELIZ. No, on my word.

LOC. Has she been left alone?

ELIZ. I did not quit her room

But during the short space your converse held.

LOC. 'Tis well. I hope thou wilt employ thy counsel
To reconcile and bring her to her duty.

Go to her chamber, and employ thy friendship

To gain the secret. Ere I rest I'll know it;

And yet I would not willingly exert

A father's stern authority to force her.

ELIZ. Did you request she'd tell you, Sir?

LOC. I did;

And more than once inclinable she seem'd,

But her emotions overcame her will.

Away, my friend—I'll visit her anon,

And hope to find her in a better mood. [Exit Eliza.

I long to hear how Brennus has proceeded

Against this stubborn clown. And here he comes.

Enter BRENNUS.

Welcome, my son. What news?

BREN. I give you joy:

By this time, Sir, your wishes are complete.

Wilt please you walk this way—ere long, perhaps,

Your presence may be wanted—as we pass

I shall relate our project

LOC. I attend.

[Exeunt.

SCENE *change to a Wood with a Romantic Rock*

Enter EDWENA.

Here stands the pointed rock. I know it well.

There towers the cliff that frowns upon the vale.

On this soft green-sward bank, tradition tells,

The airy train of nimble footed spirits,

Tripping their fairy circle by the shine

Of the transparent moon, were wont to dance

Their nightly gambols. How contriv'd the scene

To work our fancy to the tales belief!

Even I, though desperate and savage grown,

Unshrinking cannot view the dusky dread

Which yawns around me—Hark!—'tis only fancy—

All still—all hush'd—no foot steps but my own

Disturb

Disturb the silent horrors of the place.
My Elidure, what Mischief has befall'n thee?
Inhuman father, cruel and unnatural,
Thus to compel me to these hard extremes,
Not yet arriv'd!—Protect me gracious Pow'rs!
Let me not sink beneath increasing fears.
Some noise—'Tis surely he—it is—My life—

Enter ELIDURE.

Why hast thou staid so long?—Answer me, love.

ELI. Edwena!

EDW. Why do'st thou tremble thus? Alas!
Whence this confusion? Answer me!

ELI. I will,
Fast as my heart's quick throbbings will permit.
From the tall grove where I beheld thee last,
With hasty steps I sought my father's house,
Eager to feel, in a fond parent's arms,
The glad'ning welcome of a son's return.
The door was clos'd—The vale I travers'd o'er;
He was not there.—The pendant brow I climb'd,
From whose soft surface, severing the clod,
With daily toil he culls his winter's fire:
My search was fruitless.—Downward as I look'd,
Pacing the foot-path with his aged gait,
His walk from far I knew. I ran, I flew,
Eager to lighten his enfeebled arm
Of something which he bore. Ere I arriv'd,
A ruffian crew had seiz'd the aged man,
And forc'd him, helpless, back. The hindmost two
I levell'd with the sod—One rose no more:—
The rest had felt my arm, had not their leader,
Seizing by the throat the poor defenceless victim,
Close at his breast pointed the gleaming steel.
Forbear, rash man, he cried; or, by the gods!
This weapon drinks his blood. My master Brennus
Commands me to arrest this hoary traitor.
His servant's death full forely he'll revenge;
And nothing but thy own can make th' atonement.
Appall'd, my lifted sword withheld its blow,
And tacitly I view'd him borne away.

EDW. Mysterious pow'rs!—The fates are leagu'd
against us,
And thy ungovern'd rage compleats our ruin.

Brennus

Brennus suspects thee ; this some jealous plot
To drive thy youthful heat to desperation.
Thy father's innocent had stood secure.
How could'st thou be so rash ?

ELI. Who cou'd refrain,
Whose kindred veins o'erflow'd with filial love,
And boil'd with courage to avow his duty ?
The savage villians, with opprobrious taunts,
Arraign'd his innocent old age with guilt,
And scornful, brandish'd o'er his silver locks
Their ruthless blades—courageous, 'cause secure ;
While silent and serene, the good old man
Calmly resign'd him to their brutal malice

EDW. What can I think ? or how can I resolve ?
What dost thou urge ? or how hast thou determin'd ?
Hark !

ELI. Speak ! who's there ? [Enter Eliza,

ELIZ. Be not alarm'd.

EDW. Eliza !

What brings thee here, my friend ?

ELIZ. With hasty steps
I fled to find you out. Scarce were you gone
When Eldred, guarded by an armed force,
Was brought into the hall, accus'd of treason ;
And now in close confinement waits his trial.
But what concerns your present safety more,
A band of men, by Brennus's command,
Was instantly dispatch'd to search for Elidure,
With orders to secure and bring him back,
To answer for the death of an attendant
They say he slew.

ELI. Haste ! let us hence, my love.

EDW. But whither hence ?—Shall I, along with thee,
Attempt the hopeless means of an escape ?
Retard thy flight, entangle thee more surely
Within the toils that wait thy lagging steps ?
Be witness to thy fall—behold thee seiz'd,
Torn from my arms, and murder'd in my sight ?
Or shall I seek again my hated home,
And, in the hearing of thy father's groans,
Be dragg'd to loath'd embraces ? Madd'ning thought !
No ; here's my habitation. This shall be
My long, my last abode. Come then, Despair !

Drive

Drive from my brain the little sense that's left;
And thron'd in terror, rest upon my eye.
Off, empty trappings! give me robes that suit me:
Down, flowing tresses! wanton in the winds—
Bleed, bleed, my flesh! deep furrow'd with the thorns
That yield thee food; and, when with toil outweary'd
Seek for thy pillow on this couch of Nature.

ELI. Cruel Edwena! thus to rack my soul
With ill-tim'd burstings of a fruitless rage.
Recall thy recollection. Thy complaints
Destroy the share of reason Nature dealt me.
Reflect, my love: the crisis of our fate
Is now upon the hinge:—to hesitate
Will ruin us for ever. Hear me, Edwena.

ELIZ. You both are too much ruffled for reflection.
Attend to the advice which coolness dictates.
You, Elidure, with ease may make your way
Across the cliffs—you know each hidden tract.
E'er morning dawn, you'll reach your prince's camp:
Fall at his feet, and tell your hapless story;
He is too upright, not to give redress—
Mean time, do you return, and seek your chamber;
Your absence is not known. Smooth your sad brow
Before this rude invader of your peace;
Preserve your husband's father from the blow
That's aim'd against his life; and ere the day
That's meant for your espousals, Elidure
May be return'd again, I trust, in joy,
Bearing his prince's pardon for his rashness.

EDW. Art thou Eliza, or our guardian angel
Sent to speak comfort in that friendly form?
The breath of eloquence inspires thy words,
And prudence guides thy tongue. Begone, my love!
Fly quickly hence, fly from this place of danger;
Before these cruel blood-hounds trace thy steps.

ELI. And leave thee here? Oh heart-distracting
conflict!

But hard necessity is in the scale,
And weighs beyond my will—Yet in my breast
A secret something whispers me to stay,
To save Edwena, and preserve a father.

EDW. That wou'd bring instant ruin on us all.
Farewell—when can I hope for thy return?

ELI.

ELI. If fortune smiles, before to-morrow's sun
Shall climb the steep of heav'n,

EDW. One last embrace.

ELI. If thou would'st have us part, retire thyself;
For while I hear thy voice, my feet are fix'd,
Are rooted here.

EDW. Be safety thy companion,
And hovering angels thy unerring guides.

[*Exeunt Edwena and Eliza.*]

ELI. Farewell thou all that's dear!—Protecting
pow'r's,

That watch o'er innocence, and virtue guard,
Compassionate my father's hoary locks!
Compassionate Edwena's sore affliction!
Preserve them harmless from those deadly snares
That circle them around: Point me to right,
To follow the just dictates of your will.

And O! your mediating pow'r's dispense,
To save from frenzy my perplexing sense.
Exert your heav'nly mandates to controul
These agonizing tumults in my soul.

[*Exit Elidure*]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

A C T IV.

SCENE, *A Chamber.*

EDWENA.

AT length the morn's arriv'd—yon eastern hill,
Fring'd with a golden radiance, bids rejoice
Exulting nature, and abroad proclaims
The jocund entry of the lord of day.
How, all creation gladdens at the view!
To me it yields some dawn, and strikes a gleam
Through the thick horror and condensing darkness
That overhang my soul. Ere this, I trust,
My Elidure is safe; at least no news
Of the reverse, extends the line of hope.
I wonder, though, Eliza is not here:
I wish'd her call me with the waking lark.
She comes, and cheerful comes! a tranquil smile
Beams confidence within.

[*Enter Eliza.*]

ELIZ.

ELIZ. My lovely friend,
Good day. I hope your mind is more at ease
Than when I saw you last.

EDW. Thanks, good Eliza.
My weary thoughts, at length o'erwhelm'd with grief,
Sought an asylum in a pleasing slumber.
I dreamt, as on a precipice I stood,
Just darting from its summit to avoid
A monster gaping with a hideous yawn
And eager to devour me, suddenly
My Elidure, array'd in burnish'd arms,
And gliding in a golden car, preserv'd me
From destruction. There, enthron'd, I sat
In happiness and glory. But the joy,
Too pow'rful, severing the bands of sleep,
Brought back my thoughts to sad reality.
And yet, fantastic as the vision was,
So forcibly it wrought upon my mind,
The dear impression is not quite remov'd,
But shoots a distant ray of expectation
To my reviving hopes.

ELIZ. Your dream portends
A happy termination to your woes.

EDW. So says my wish—But has there aught transpir'd
Of Elidure since last we spoke together?

ELIZ. Not a word.—I sent, as you requested
A messenger to gain intelligence;
But nothing could he learn.

EDW. What hear'st thou then
Of Eldred?

ELIZ. Close confin'd within the cell,
He still remains.

EDW. What is their charge against him?

ELIZ. Some act of treason, as I am inform'd;
But what distinctly cannot yet be gather'd.

EDW. I doubt, my father! thou hast play'd him
false

Those fields of his have long disturb'd thy peace,
And now, I fear, bring ruin on their master.

ELIZ. Heav'n pardon you the thought!—you cannot,
sure,
Suspect a parent of so dark a deed.

D

EDW,

EDW. Eldred I can't ; nor wou'd I doubt my father,
 Brennus I shou'd suspect ; to him alone
 The guilt I wou'd impute—there turn, Suspicion,
 Thy dark envenom'd eye. And, O Eliza !
 If e'er thou loved'st me, now thy friendship join
 To aid my efforts in a good man's cause.

ELIZ. Tell me, my friend ! which way can I assist you ?

EDW. Find out the messenger you just now mention'd ;
 Let him again endeavour to obtain
 An interview with Eldred—Bid him say,
 My services are lab'ring in his favour :
 Wish him to keep his firmness and his patience
 Beneath his load of mortifying wrongs.
 And, as I dare not personally wait
 The issue of his trial, let the man
 With diligence observe each circumstance,
 And bring me present notice of th' event.

ELIZ. With care I shall perform the friendly office.

EDW. Fly, my Eliza ! and return with speed. [*Ex. Eliz.*
 Mean time I'll importune the right'ous gods
 To save my husband, and to clear his father.

[*Exit Edwena.*

SCENE *changes to a Hall,*

Enter LOCRINE and BRENNUS talking.

LOC. Granted all this—suppose the son no more,
 The father too ta'en off—how can I hold,
 With any show of right their patrimony ?

BREN. Nothing more plain—Convicted, as they
 shall be,
 Of murder and of treason, their estate
 I seize for the king's use, and give to you.
 The thing, too trifling for the royal notice,
 Will cause no question ; or suppose it shou'd,
 You'll find my int'rest and my pow'r too great
 To heed inquiry.

LOC. Moves it not your wonder
 The villain cou'd escape the hot pursuit ?
 Such numbers too !

BREN. I hear he took the rock,
 Favour'd by darkness and his thorough knowledge
 Of the wild pathless height.—But faithful Morgan,

Who

Who bears dispatches from me to the king,
With his two hardy comrades, all well arm'd,
Ere this have laid him low.—Such were my orders;
Or, if they reach'd him not upon the road,
To seek the royal tent, and get command
To seize him as a murderer in the camp.

Enter SERVANT.

SER. The prisoner, my lord, attends without.

BREN. Bring him in.—[*Ex Ser*].—Will you examine
Or shall I? — [the delinquent?]

LOC. Do you; it best will suit you,
I must not seem to interfere in this.

BREN. 'Twere better not, unless necessity
Requires you shou'd. I'll soon dispatch the business.

Enter ELDRED in chains. Guards, &c.

Dost thou now come, dissimulating veteran,
To gull our senses with the mask of truth,
Whilst all within is perfidy and treason?

ELD. It is not, lord, a mark of dignity,
Thus to insult the feelings of distress;
Nor yet of equity, to slander innocence
With aggravating epithets of guilt,
Till facts indelible have prov'd the crime.

BREN. That we shall soon effect. Produce the
witness.

ELD. First let me know by what authority
I'm order'd here, or who's to be my judge?
I own no ruler but my king; no laws
But of my country. Sacred may they be,
And curs'd the wretch that offers to subvert them!
If, by those powr's a magistrate appointed,
You call me to my answer—I obey:—
If not, though helpless, aged, and in chains,
I will withstand the will of usurpation,
And, with my latest breath, defy thy mandate.

BREN. Thou hast not yet, I find, forgot thy boasting,
Thy ill-tim'd pride, and low-born insolence.

ELD. What call'st thou boasting?—honest utterance!
What call'st thou insolence?—a consciousness
Of unthought guile and native rectitude!
A soul, with guilt unfully'd, cannot shrink
Beneath oppressive threats—And, hear me, Sir;
The silver streamlet trickling from the spring,

Is not more free from the polluting soil,
Than is my breast exempt from conscious ill.

BREN. Professions, without facts, are but the masks
Of artful villany, the cloaks of fallacy,
To gain belief from unsuspecting hearers,
And sin with lesser fear of a detection.
Such are the motives of thy vain assertions?
Else why decline a hearing of thy actions?

ELD. Why wilt thou urge me utter those assertions?
Or why compel me to dispute thy office?
Thy pow'r approv'd, I shall await my doom
With truth-rob'd confidence and calm submission.

BREN. I come not here to argue my authority
With every stubborn fool that dares deny it.
But, that thy wily cunning may suggest
No room for captious hindrance or cavil,
Know then, by legal right, by legal deputation,
Thou seest me here, a chief and magistrate,
With orders to exert the force of law
To punish rapine and controul injustice.

ELD. I might require a clearer certainty
Of thy appointment, than this bare recital.—
But best an individual like me
Shou'd risk some wrong, than by punctilious doubts
To stay the course of justice, or retard
The smallest execution of the laws.

What have your witnesses to urge against me?

BREN. Eliud, stand forth.

ELIUD. My lord!

BREN. Know'st thou this man?

ELIUD. Most perfectly.

BREN. Say what of him thou know'st.

ELIUD. The morning of that memorable day
When Hengist first gain'd access to our vales,
Sent by your order to survey the pass
Which you were station'd to defend, I found
All safe—each man attentive to his post.
When down a splinter'd crevice of the cliff,
A passage by no human footsteps press'd,
Except the native shepherds of the hill
Seeking some straggler wander'd from the flock,
I thought I saw the gleaming of a helm.
Advancing nearer, my astonish'd eye

Perceiv'd

Perceiv'd distinctly the unthought-of tract
Unbosoming a band of armed men,
And he, that rebel, pointing out the way:
I hasten'd to acquaint you with the tidings,
But all too late—I need not say the rest.

BREN. Too well we know it.—Thou rebellious
traitor,

What can thy hoary artifice suggest,
Why sentence should not instantly be pass'd,
Such as thy crime deserves?

ELD. Alas, my lord!

Why shou'd I plead, why offer a defence,
When you, my judge, seem wishful to promote
And speak me condemnation? Here I swear
By the great sacred Ruler of the sky,
I know no more of this alleged crime,
Than does the babe before its infant cry
Waits its arrival in this land of sorrow.

BREN. Thy mere denial will not be admitted—
Unless some witness can attest thy innocence:
Thy crime stands prov'd, and the award is death.

ELD. I have no witness but an honest heart;
No friends to back me, but my spotless thoughts;
No vouchers but my own plain words—alas!
Too ineffectual to excite remorse
In thee my hard and stony adversary.—
No, no, fond tongue; vain are the sounds of truth;
The lamb unheeded bleats within the grasp
Of the devouring wolf—My guiltless life
Is the devoted victim—Wou'd that were all!
I'd yield it freely—But a keener stab
Pierces my straining vitals—Hold, my heart,
Thy wonted firmness—burst not ere thy time.—
Lord Locrine—hear me—'tis to thee I now
Address my speech.—

LOC. Go on, I am attentive.

ELD. Does not a livid paleness taint thy cheek,
To view these chains corrode my aged flesh,
And silent like an unconcern'd spectator,
Behold me fall by the stern hand of pow'r,
Because by villiany I have been hunted
And drove within her pale? Or hast thou train'd
The bloody pack, and join'd 'em in the cry?—

Too sure, thou hast ; and dearly I abide
 My late refusal of thy proffer'd purchase.—
 Yes, there's my source of ill—what else cou'd raise
 This deep-laid plot against my harmless life ?—
 Inhuman robber's !—was it not enough
 To spoil me of my all, but, with my being,
 You'd plunder my good name, traduce my memory,
 And whelm a son too in his parent's ruin ?—
 Sit fast, my brain, and turn not with the thought—
 My boy ! my virtuous boy ! thy killing wrongs
 Cut deeper than my own—Cruel reflection !—
 Oh ! the sharp trying pang—it grinds—it breaks.
 The crackling cords that bind the feat of life,
 Shatters the crazy texture of my frame,
 And drags the crashing fabric to the earth.

LOC. Insinuating wretch ! how dar'st thou thus
 Attack my character and name, in terms
 So dark and grossly vile ?—I had design'd
 To interpose my voice in thy behalf ;
 But thou hast forfeited my kind intentions.
 Canst thou expect from such opprobrious language
 To merit mercy, or gain our pity ?

ELD. Mercy I hope not, that's against your Int'rest :
 I ask no pity, 'tis not in your natures ;
 Else cou'd your flinty bosoms ne'er suggest
 A thought so bloody, barbarous, and savage,
 To subject a poor, helpless, innocent
 Old man to misery like mine.—

BLEN. No more :
 Hear what the law decrees.—For that thou hast,
 In vile despite of nature's nearest impulse,
 Assisted in their cruel depredations
 Britain's detested foes—thy all and life
 Become the legal forfeits of the state.
 Guards, take him hence, and execute the sentence.

ELD. A little longer, but a little longer,
 And part of that hard sentence had been needless !—
 Assist some friendly hand, to raise me up—
 Grant me the last kind favour you can give,
 Your help to bear me from the fatal sight
 Of those death-darting basilisks !—Yet—hold—
 One word before I go.—Great Gods that view
 The thoughts of man—you know my heart,

You

You see the ray of innocence around it;
Receive me to your care—and O forgive
My persecutors—on their trial-day!
Let them not want that mercy and that pity
Which their hard hearts unjustly have denied me.

[As he is going out, enter Edwenia.]

EDW. *[Speaking to the guards who are carrying out Eldred.]*
Defer your cruel orders for a moment
Ye ministers of Death.—Forgive me, Sir,
If I presume a while to stay your mandates;

[Exit Brennus and Eliud with Servant.]

And you, my father, that I intermeddle
In what perhaps you term beyond my sphere,—
But, oh! can I behold you plunging down
A boundless steep of misery, and withhold
My filial hand to save you from the danger?
Observe that face!—can it inhabit there?
And sure, you could not rest your head in peace,
And bear within your breast the hard reflection,
That you had destin'd innocence to death!—
What! honest Eldred!—the man so long rever'd
For rectitude, the mirror of uprightness!—
O Sir! reflect before it be too late.—
Preserve your name from the detested blot
His fate must bring upon it:—nor shall mine
Escape the stain—I too must share the stigma,
And lisping lips shall brand me as I pass,
As daughter to the murderer of virtue—

LOC. Whence these emotions? whence this ill-tim'd
fervor?

Or why these vain suggestions?—Know'st thou not,
The laws, not I, have doom'd his guilty fall?—
His crime approv'd and clear, by what pretence
Can I avert the righteous stroke of Justice?

EDW. Alas, my lord! did Justice here preside—
But I'm your daughter; and it ill becomes me
To say what tongues indifferent will urge
As the vindictive mercenary cause
Of his destruction.—Or suppose him guilty;
For my sake, Sir, preserve him. O reflect,
He gave me second being—his son redeem'd
My fleeting life, or now you had been childless—
O turn not from me—'tis your daughter sues,

Your

Your lov'd Edwena—must I sue in vain?
 No; I will cling, thus clasp around your knees,
 Till rising pity beams upon your brow,
 And cheers me with the lambent light of mercy.

Loc. I charge thee rise, and cease thy fruitless suit,
 Perverse and headstrong girl! By heav'n I swear,
 Were I inclin'd to mercy, thou hast rous'd
 Reflections in my breast, that wou'd at once
 Destroy the rising charitable thought.—

Thy motives for this foolish partiality
 Are not to me unknown—Away—retire—
 Hence to thy chamber—Harbour not a wish
 Against thy duty, or beneath thy rank.

Edw. Yes, Sir, I will; I have observ'd my duty.
 My duty bids me use my utmost means
 To save from wrongs that venerable man.
 And since intreaties cannot reach your heart,
 Nor wake you to the gentle calls of pity,
 I'll try the sympathizing pow'rs of nature,
 And ties of kindred—Elidure's my husband.

Loc. Perdition to that word!

ELD. Benignant heav'n!

Edw. Yes, Eldred's son, his Elidure's my husband.

Loc. O grant me patience, ye eternal pow'rs!
 To bear that cutting sound—Abandon'd girl,
 Go share thy husband's fate; for by yon heav'n,
 I hear, henceforth, renounce all intercourse
 With thee and thine. Mark, I disclaim thee. Hence!
 Fly from this roof, and see my face no more!

[Exit Locrine.]

Edw. Severe resolve—unnatural decree!—
 Yet shakes it not the dictates of my soul.

ELD. My heav'nly guardian! my protecting angel!
 Thus let me kneel, and thank thee for thy care.

Edw. O Sir, forbear! nor cover me with blushes.
 First let me crave your blessing, and your pardon,
 For that I have so long conceal'd your state,
 And left you subject to such cruel wrongs. [Kneels.]

ELD. My child! my benefactress!

[Kneels and embraces.]

Enter B R E N N U S.

See bestow'd

The merited reward; he has, besides,

Our

Our warmest thanks, Madam, I must command
Your speedy separation; 'tis not fit
You should behold the sequel—Eliud
Shall bring you presently our farther will.

Remove your prisoner, and guard him well. [To Gu.

EDW. Slaves, touch him not—stand back, and learn
your distance.

'Tis I defend him—I!—and ere your swords
Can touch his guiltless life, my own heart's blood
Shall bathe their reeking points—And, monster! thou,
Thou too should'st tremble at the words I utter.

For know the valiant Elidure approaches;
Secure I trust he comes, with royal grace,
To save a father, and protect a wife;
When, if thou dar'st attempt the hopeless trial,
A parent's righteous cause, and his bold arm,
Shall overwhelm thee down with terror and dismay.

BREN. I own I shall not meet him willingly;
I hope to live a little longer, Madam.
For hear, insulting female! and let fall
Thy hopes—That boaster is no more.

EDW. Ha!

ELD. Heav'n's!

BREN. A messenger has just now brought me word,
That, overta'en near Oerddrew's knotty brow,
And call'd to turn and answer for his guilt,
He spurn'd their pow'r, and in the conflict fell.

[Edwena falls,

ELD. O save that sinking excellence—

[Enter Eliza.

BREN. Away,
Intruding dotard—seize and bear him off.

ELD. Look there—will you—Oh!—can you force
me hence,

Without one parting word—one longing look?—

BREN. Obey my orders, bear him to his cell,
There wait my farther purpose.

ELD. Hence assassins—

Thou viper—thou unfeeling viper—monster—

BREN. Remove him from my sight.

ELD. Murder!—no help?—

Hear me then, gods!—O let this monster suffer
Torments unknown—yet uninvented pains,

Form'd

Form'd by the first of wo-creating furies ;
 That he may feel anguish immense as mine,
 Stings sharp as now pierce my poor aged bosom,
 Rend my weak straining eye strings, and cut short
 The faint expiring sobs of weary nature. [*Is carried off.*]

BREN. How fares Edwena ? does she breathe ?

ELIZ. Not yet.

BREN. Assist her with thy care, while I attend
 Her father. [*Exit Brennus.*]

ELIZ. Friend !—Edwena !—sure the life
 Is fled. No, she revives.——

EDW. Your stay was long,
 My love. How cold thou art !—a deadly war
 Spreads o'er thy cheek.—Why dost thou fly me so ?
 Stay——soft——Where am I ?——

ELIZ. Guard her reason, heav'n !

EDW. Eliza—oh—

ELIZ. How fare you, madam ?

EDW. Well ;

At least I shall be soon ; for oh, I feel
 The cold damp hand of death upon my heart.
 My friend, thy arm—support me.—Where is Eldred ?

ELIZ. The guards have led him——

EDW. Ah me ! to execution ?

ELIZ. No, madam ; to his cell.

EDW. Conduct me thither.

ELIZ. Might I advise ye, seek composure first.

EDW. Where ? in the grave ?—that peaceful couch
 alone

Can give composure to distress'd Edwena.——
 Think'st thou, thus exil'd from a parent's love,
 My husband murder'd, and his father doom'd
 To death's hard conflict, aught can bring relief
 To my afflicting agonizing pangs,
 But the dark confines of the silent tomb ?——
 To those blest mansions, Eldred, I'll attend thee,
 In search of happiness denied us here :

There walk with Elidure the blissful plains,
 Where wo intrudes not, nor injustice reigns ;
 Sharing those blessings which the gods dispense,
 To conscious truth and heav'n-born innocenc.

[*Exeunt Edwena and Eliza.*]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

A C T V.

S C E N E, *A Hall.*

Enter BRENNUS, and ELIUD following.

BRENNUS,

NO news of Morgan yet?
ELIUD. None, my good lord.

BREN. Why comes not Eric?

ELIUD. Sir, he is not found.

BREN. Had he the promis'd gold?

ELIUD. He had.

BREN. I wish,

Now leisure suits, minutely to inquire
How chanc'd their meeting with that Elidure,
And by what means he fell. Report to me
Each circumstance as to thyself related.

ELIUD. Near as my memory will let.—Not far
Your faithful party, with impatient steps,
Had measur'd the ascent to Oerddrew's cliff,
Beyond the grove of Guannus, when above,
In clinking sounds, the loosen'd stones betray'd
The certain tread of feet:—soon was descry'd
Upon the brow the sculking fugitive.
Bladud, most fleet of foot, first gain'd the pass
That leads to Mouthy's vale, waylaid the slave,
And sunk beneath his might. Morgan in vain
Rush'd on to save his friend:—himself had fall'n
Before the daring foe, had not a rock,
Lanch'd from fierce Eric's arm, repell'd his death,
And left an easy conquest for their swords.

BREN. There let him rest. But what of Morgan
then?

ELIUD. Dispatching Eric back to bear the news
Of the event, he posted to the camp
On special message, as I understood,
From you.

BREN. Ere this he might have been return'd.

ELIUD. He surely might.

BREN. The moment he arrives
Let me have notice.

ELIUD. Sir, most certainly.

BREN. Who had the watch last night?

ELIUD. 'Till the third cock,
My Lord, 'twas mine.

BREN. Know'st thou if Locrine's daughter
Sought for admittance at the cell this morning?

ELIUD. She has not, Sir; but messengers, I hear,
Requesting entrance, oft have been refus'd.

BREN. How bore she her denial yesterday?

ELIUD. With all the burst of disappointed rage;
Till, quite exhausted with the force of passion,
Her spirits sunk to senseless inattention;
When, by the friendly counsel of Eliza,
I help'd to bear her to her own apartment.

BREN. Let her be told, if it now suits her will,
She has my leave to see the prisoner;
And send me instant word of her arrival.

ELIUD. I shall observe, my lord.

BREN. When Morgan comes,
Forget not presently to bear me tidings.

ELIUD. You shall not, Sir, have cause to doubt my
care. *[Exit Eliud.]*

BREN. Thy zeal shall be rewarded. Morgan's stay
Creates suspense. I wou'd he were return'd!
This league of friendship with the Saxon king
Concluded once, my project were secure.
Locrine, grown frantic through ungovern'd fury,
Seems quite depriv'd of reason; which affords me
A just pretence to manage his affairs
As his intended son. The husband's death
Has rendered, too, more probable the union;
And Eldred's present sentence and confinement
May prove the means to forward that event;
At least it shall be tried.—Yes, haughty dame!
In spite of all your boasted fortitude
I'll yet find means to bend you to my will.

[Exit Brennus.]

SCENE changes to a Prison.

ELDRED discover'd in chains upon the ground.

ELD. Welcome, my valliant boy!—Soft—soft—
where am I?

O flatt'ring fantasy!—thou balm of wo!
Thou balsam grateful to affliction's wounds!

How

How well hast thou beguil'd the weary hour !
But now with ecstasy I view'd my son
Crown'd with the wreath of conquest ; while afar,
In peals of plaudits, rung the deafning shouts
Of victory and joy—when lo, I wake
To the sad horrors of a dungeon's gloom
Robb'd of my Elidure, my heart's sole comfort,
What am I now ?—the scoff of human nature !—
A helpless, childless, and distress'd old man !
I'll try to rise—So—so—'Tis morn—Once more
I see the light—perhaps for the last time.
Shrink not, my flesh, nor shudder at the thought.
My life o'ercast in its approaching eve,
And just descending to the shade of night,
Why should I tremble to behold the veil
Of endless peace drawn o'er my closing eye ?
Cast off that frown, inexorable death !
Thou hast no terror for a spotless bosom :
For if the mind survives the body's exit,
That Pow'r which gives it being will dispense
The just rewards that wait a right'ous life ;
Or if in death all sense of thought expires,
Then with that thought all feeling must be lost.
Thus, hopeful of the best, and of the worst
Regardless, will I meet the stroke of fate,
And yield me, cheerful, to the will of heav'n

E D W E N A (*without.*)

I have your master's orders for admittance.

ELD. Hark !

[*Enter Edwena.*]

EDW. Where art thou, Eldred ?

ELD. That benignant voice
Strikes harmonizing softness through the soul,
And beams a day of cheerfulness around
This solitary cell.—My heav'nly visitor !
O how shall I receive thee in this drear,
This deathful mansion !

EDW. Thou much injur'd man,
I come to share the woes. The tyger grows
Unnatural ; and I have leave at length
To mix my tears with thine.—Have I thy hand—
And do I find thee safe ?—How hast thou been ?

ELD. As well as piercing miseries, like mine,
Wou'd give me leave ?

E

Edw.

EDW. Fain would I see thy face ;
 But the dim particles of distant day
 Glimmer too faintly through this cavern'd gloom.
 Let me conduct thee to the light : our foes,
 Though ripe with savageness, will scarce deny
 That favour to me. Lean upon my arm.

ELD. In vain I try for words to speak my thanks ;
 'Twould pose the pow'r of language. Silent, then,
 Let me admire thy worth—while the big tear
 Proclaims my joy, my gratitude, and wonder.

[Exeunt Edwena and Eldred.]

S C E N E *changes to the Area before the Dungeon.*

Re-enter EDWENA, leading Eldred.

EDW. *[To the guards, who retire.]*
 Friends, give us leave a while ; at distance wait,
 And seek not to intrude upon our converse.

ELD. A little farther—yet a little farther—
 Let me encroach upon thy gentle nature :
 The air's refreshment, grateful to the sense,
 Cheers my old frame, and lightens these hard shakles.

EDW. Would I cou'd bear their weight.—Alas ! my
 father.

How pale thou look'it !—

ELD. Thou pattern of all tenderness,
 This kind concern speaks comfort to my sufferings.
 But oh ! thy sight, afflicted as thou art,
 Gives heart felt anguish for thy cruel wrongs
 Far keener than my own ; and in my mind
 Rouses reflections I wou'd willingly
 Erase from memories distracted page —
 O fly this place !—desert my luckless fate
 Before I drag thee down into destruction.
 Thy torch new-lighted, glows transparently
 With strength and clearness, and may spotless shine
 An age to come :—then let not my weak lamp
 Pollute that brightness with its dying smother,
 But twinkling sink unnotic'd in its socket.

EDW. Alas ! thou know'st but little of the firmness
 Edwena's breast contains, to think I cou'd
 Endure a weary loathsome life—nay, life
 On fairest terms, and suffer the lov'd father
 Of my Elidure—O Sir !—I need your aid—

On mention of that name, the briny torrent
Out-bursts its limits, and the strong emotion
O'ercomes the pow'rs of speech.—

ELD. Bright excellence!
Look down, my son—my boy—my Elidure—
If yet thou hast not gain'd the realms of bliss,
But stay'st to make me partner of thy flight;
Look down, and view this model of perfection,
Of truth, of virtue, and connubial fondness!
Yes, my pale love! can I behold thy father,
My father too, (for I've no parent now
But him), a prey to piercing miseries,
Anguish, and death, and look unheeding on?
Away, vile thought!—No, no, thou injur'd goodness,
I'll wait thee ev'n in death; for should thy foes,
Refuse to join me in thy cruel sentence,
If there be water, steel, or pointed rocks,
I'll find some means to rid me of this clay,
And lead thee fleeting to my husband's shade.

ELD. Take heed, fair creature—there thou'dst quit
the path
Of thy uprightness—That were a foul attack
On heaven's prerogative, a theft against
The most Supreme, which sorely wou'd intral thee.—
Life for a life is human forfeiture;
But he who robs the gods of his own being,
Though he evade his miseries on earth,
To keener pains must be consign'd hereafter.
How cou'dst thou bear to view thy husband's shade
Treading the blissful valleys of Elysium,
Whilst thou, secluded from those bright abodes,
Art doom'd to wander o'er a barren waste
For suicide, the sad eternal mansion—

EDW. Oh, Sir! I feel your words as flakes of ice;
At once they cut, and freeze my wounded soul.
Instruct me how to bear the threatening mischief.

ELD. With resignation to the higher Pow'rs,
Await thy dissolution. I and Elidure
Will hover o'er thee till thy hour of fate.
Then, joining, wing our flight to happier regions,
Where man's injustice can no more undo us.

EDW. That wish'd event were purchas'd cheap
indeed,

Ev'n by an age of wo.—And yet, alas!
 How can my suff'ring nature bear the task?—
 But soon begins the trial—for my sum
 Of earthly ills concentre in that form!

Enter BRENNUS and Guards.

BREN. You two remain within;—the rest retire
 And closely guard the portal.—So, Madam,
 You still, I find, embrace the tot'ring ruin;
 Nor will regard the dread impending danger,
 Till whelm'd in the destruction.

EDW. Shameless monster!
 Thou art my ruin—thou art my destruction.
 Who else but thee cut off the growing branch;
 And com'st thou now to sell the sick'ning stem?

BREN. I come, ill-natur'd fair one, to assuage
 Thy present anguish, and restore thy peace.

EDW. Canst thou bring back the life? recal the
 breath?

Bid it re-animate its earthly frame,
 And give it to resume its vital motion?—
 No, no, thou canst not!—Hence, then, with thy vain
 Insidious arts—I will not be deluded.

BREN. I come not here profusely to expend
 A waste of time in fruitless altercation.
 Then to the point—Thy husband now no more,
 Thou hast no tie to hold thee from my suit.
 Thy father's contract gives thee to my arms;
 My right, unalienable but by death.
 Yet still I wou'd not wish to use the means
 Of harsh constraint, unless I am compell'd
 By thy morose and obstinate perverseness.
 Eldred's distress sorely thou seem'st to mourn;
 He shall be free—this moment I'll release him,
 So thou'lt submit thee calmly to the rites
 Thy father's wish and my true passion urge—
 Start'st thou?—this instant yield thee to my offer,
 Or, by the gods! he dies.—I'll wait no forms;
 But instant have him strangled in thy sight.

ELD. O listen not to his accursed proposal!
 Stain not, bright innocent, thy spotless bosom
 With such a shameful act.—What!—marry him!—
 Brennus! the hateful murderer of thy husband—
 Nature cries out and shudders at the union,

Sec,

See, at thy feet, an injur'd father begs
The fate he threats, sooner than linger here
A wretched life preserv'd by thy undoing.
O let me die a thousand, thousand deaths,
Rather than he, that monster, shou'd succeed,
And triumph in his villany;—for then
Each day, each hour, each moment, were a death
Attended with excruciating torments—

EDW. Rise, reverend sire, thy arguments prevail,
Decide the struggling conflict in my breast
'Twixt filial pity and my tortur'd virtue,
And rouse my coward nature to its duty.—
Know then, thou wretch! that I despise thy threatnings.
Here sheath thy hungry steel—I'll suffer death,
Nay, what is worse than twice ten thousand deaths,
Unshrinking see him breathless—e'er I yield
To thy detested, to thy loath'd embraces.

BREN. I'll put thee to the test—perform your orders.
[To guards going to seize Eldred.]

EDW. Hold, ye infernal ministers of death,
You do mistake your office—I'm the criminal;
I'm the sole object of your masters rage:
On me, on me, turn all your cruelty:

BREN. No hesitation, slaves! obey my will.
[Seize Eldred.]

ELD. O for my liberty and youth!—Away—
Off, hirelings, off—or you will rouse a flame
Will forge these fetters into edged arms,
To hack ye, slaves!—

[Wrests himself from them, and staggers against the scene.]

BREN. Take, then, thy fate from me.

EDW. O hold thy murdering hand!—

BREN. Away, vain woman;
Consent thee to my wishes, or he falls.—

ELI. *[Speaking without.]*
Stand by, ye hellish guards! and let me pass:
Who dares resistance, dies—

EDW. What heavenly sound
Accosts my ears?

BREN. Secure the inner door.— *[Exit Guards]*

ELI. Assault the portal; seize those flying slaves!—

EDW. Is it his mortal voice, or from above
Comes he to snatch us from the threat'ning grasp
Of cruelty and guilt— *[Guard. Elind returns.]*

ELIUD. My lord! young Elidure,
 Attended with a Band of armed youths,
 Is breaking through the gate.

BREN. Accurs'd the tongue
 That tells it.

EDW. Tyrant! now—now vainly storm,—
 Or supplicate thy fellow fiends to aid thee.—

[Shouts and clash of Swords.]

Hear'st thou those shouts? melodiously they sound.—
 My husband comes, to shake the deathful blade,
 My husband comes!—yes, tremble at the word,
 To strike thee nerveless with his forceful arm,
 And gleam confusion to thy guilty sight.

ELD. Break, break, ye crackling hinges! my old
 eyes

Will burst with expectation else to see
 My boy, my Elidure.

BREN. That shall not be
 On earth: for since I'm taken in the toil,

[A loud crash as of the bursting of gates.]

I'll have my vengeance ere the hunters seize me.

Die, wretch!—

[Offers to kill Eldred.]

Enter ELIDURE, in a rich Saxon dress, who runs
 in between Eldred and Brennus.

ELI. Hold, hateful monster! hither turn
 Thy murd'rous point. This bosom will not shrink.

BREN. Be thou a man or demon, I'll assail thee—
 Yet, ere we close, give answer to my question;
 Art thou an earthly, or immortal being?
 For I believ'd thee dead.

ELI. That I still live,
 These firm substantial nerves shall let thee know.
 I here arrest thee, traitor; therefore yield thee,
 Or thou diest. Such are my sovereign's orders.

BREN. Assail'd by odds, and circled thus around,
 Yet fearless will I dare the test. Strike home,
 And if I shrink—

ELI. No words; have at thy heart.

[Fight. Brennus falls.]

ELD. Support my son, ye pow'rs!—He falls—he
 falls—

BREN. Perfidious chance! disgraceful destiny!—
 Thus—thus to sink beneath a peasant's stroke!—

And

And yet, the veil of prejudice, remov'd,
My fall is just—I'm caught within the net
My hand had spread—Excuse it, gods! and oh— [Dies.

ELD. My boy—

ELI. My father—my belov'd Edwena.

EDW. O my surviving love—my dearest husband!
Art thou not hurt? No, no, I clasp, I have thee
Safe in my arms—But let me view thee well—
What has befall'n thee?—let me know it all.

ELI. O my dear love, the story of my fortune
Since I beheld thee last, shall be related
When better leisure suits—At present this—
The vile assassins on the cliff o'ertook me.
The first advancing, heedless of his safety,
Had felt my vengeance ere his friends arriv'd.
The odds I combated—Morgan receiv'd
The death he merited—The other fled;
And by a faithless lie, receiv'd the wages
Of a deceitful and deceived villain

EDW. But whence this change of dress—this strange
Equipment?

ELI. Morgan expiring, with a conscious dread,
Confess'd, that he, by Brennus's command,
Forg'd the foul falsehood of my father's treason:
For which, in some degree, to make amends,
He gave me from his bosom a black scroll
As ere disgrac'd the pen of wickedness;
Terms of an hated league and combination
To sell his country to her mortal foe.
I bore them to the camp—where I arriv'd
As the two armies, in battalia rang'd,
Each other fac'd. A Saxon of vast strength
Challeng'd the bravest of our host—On me
Our gracious king conferr'd the glorious task:
I fought, and I subdu'd the haughty braggart.
His arms and dress, and earnest of rewards,
You now behold.—The Saxon's death at once
Struck terror to the enemy, and courage
To our transported ranks.—The victory
Declar'd for Vortimer; who presently
Gave ear to my complainings, and redress'd e'm.
For, well convinc'd of Brennus's defection,

He

He sent me to heap vengeance on the traitor,
Commander in his room.

EDW. Great Heav'n, in this
Your justice shines conspicuous; for which,
And all your blessings, my glad heart o'erflows
With wonder and with thanks.

Enter E L I Z A.

ELIZ. The news I bring
Will damp, I fear, your present glow of fortune.
Locrine, escaping in the general uproar,
Outstripp'd pursuit; and gaining the round turret
Which fronts the western cliff, threw himself headlong.
I saw him breathless brought into the house,
And presently made haste to tell it you.

ELID. I own, my love, your tears are natural
On this occasion. Rest upon my arm.
I will support thee through the road of life,
With the joint duties of a husband's love—
And a fond father's care.

ELD. His wretched fate
I too lament. His crime, I know, proceeded
From the persuasions of that cruel monster:
But he was guilty found, and merited
The rage of the supreme; who righteously
Distributes justice to the race of mortals.

For though a while the wicked man may reign,
At Heav'n's indulgence let us not complain.
Its roused vengeance will at length awake,
And righteous wrath the impious overtake.

F I N I S



